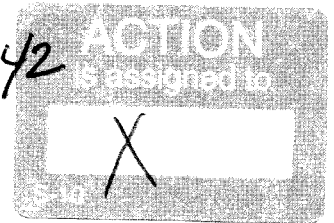


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OST 2004-17343-42



The Honorable Norman Y. Mineta
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
400 7th Street SW, Room 10200
Washington, DC 20590

9 April 2004

**Re: Application for Small Community Air Service Development Grant –
Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport, Ithaca, New York.**


Dear Secretary Mineta:

I write today in support of the grant application from the Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport. As the chair of TCAD, the County's economic development organization, I am very much aware of what affordable and reliable air service means to our economy. Several years ago, the airport was identified in the County's Economic Development Strategy as our greatest infrastructure resource in attracting and keeping businesses.

Sadly, the erosion of air service over the past two years has produced a lack of competition and very high airfares, forcing people to look to other airports for reasonably priced flights. Local employers are forced to drive long distances for air travel; this is unproductive and costly for individuals as well as for the local economy as a whole.

A Small Community Air Service Development grant would provide much needed assistance in making our airport more attractive to commercial carriers and in helping us craft a sustainable management model for the new air travel environment. Recently named the "Number 1 Emerging City in the United States" Ithaca may well be the community of the future but, because we are isolated from rail and the interstate road system, it is vital that air service be improved over what is currently available. Your utmost consideration of Ithaca's application would be greatly appreciated.

Very truly yours,


Barbara Blanchard, Chair
Board of Directors

cc: Robert Nicholas

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